

**TO: Agencies and Interested Persons**

**FROM: California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)**  
**John Webb, Office Chief**  
**North Region Environmental Services**

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**  
**FOR PROPOSED SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS TO STATE ROUTE 16 IN YOLO**  
**COUNTY, CA**

**PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: June 16, 2003 to July 15, 2003**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 3, is the lead agency for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the above referenced project located in Yolo County. The document is being prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

CEQA Section 15082 states that once a decision is made to prepare an EIR, the Lead Agency must prepare a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform all responsible and trustee agencies that an EIR will be prepared. The purpose of an EIR is to provide responsible agencies and interested persons with sufficient information describing the proposed project and the potential environmental effects to enable them to make meaningful response as to the scope and content of the information to be included within the EIR.

Layouts of the draft project proposal have been sent with this NOP to public agencies. Other interested parties may view the plans at the Esparto Library (17065 Yolo Avenue Esparto, CA 95627) Monday through Thursday 1 to 8 pm, and Saturday 10 am to 2 pm. The document will also be available on the Internet at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist3/projects/yolo16/envdoc.htm> or at Caltrans, District 3 (2389 Gateway Oaks Dr., Ste. 100 Sacramento, CA 95833) Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4 pm.

### ***COMMENTS***

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed project are addressed and that all significant issues are identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. We will need the name of a contact person in your agency. Written comments or questions concerning this project should be sent by July 15, 2003 to:

Karen McWilliams, Chief Environmental Planner  
Office of Environmental Management, S2  
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)  
2389 Gateway Oaks Drive, MS-15  
Sacramento, CA 95833

### ***PROJECT LOCATION***

The project site is located along State Route (SR) 16 between Brooks and Interstate 505 in Yolo County, a distance of approximately 21 miles (Figure 1).

### ***PROJECT DESCRIPTION***

This section of SR 16 has seen a significant increase in traffic volumes and accidents in recent years. The majority of the existing highway facility is not up to current Caltrans standards and a portion is susceptible to flooding.

The following improvements are intended to improve safety along SR 16 by reducing the number and severity of accidents.

- Provide a 20-foot clear recover zone which includes 8-foot shoulders and place rumble strips on both sides of SR 16 for the length of the project, except within the towns of Esparto and Capay.
- Improve several intersections, including turning lanes.
- Correct several non-standard curves.
- Raise SR 16 out of the 100-year floodplain between Esparto and Interstate 505.

- Widen and/or replace all affected bridges.

Additional right-of-way adjacent to SR 16 would be required to accommodate the proposed project.

## ***PROJECT ALTERNATIVES***

Caltrans intends to utilize the existing SR 16 corridor to the extent feasible for the proposed safety improvements. The alternatives analysis will focus on design variations and construction scenarios that minimize environmental impacts while achieving the projects objectives.

## ***ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AFFECTED BY PROPOSAL***

### ***COMMUNITY IMPACTS***

The proposed improvements will necessitate the full and partial acquisition of several public and privately owned parcels.. The majority of the right of way that will be acquired for this project is agricultural but in some cases the acquisitions will require the relocation of residents.

### ***FARMLAND***

The proposed project would require the State to purchase right-of-way from adjacent landowners. The majority of the land that would be needed is used for various types of agriculture. A Farmland Conversion Impact Rating will be required to comply with the Farmland Protection Policy Act. Furthermore, it will be necessary to determine the impacts to designated Williamson Act farmlands as well as evaluate the impacts of the conversion of prime and unique farmlands.

### ***WATER QUALITY***

The project site is located within the lower Cache Creek drainage basin and several watercourses are present within the project study area.

Cache Creek is known to contain high levels of mercury in the sub surface. While the project will not directly impact Cache Creek there is a potential that mercury has been spread by floodwaters and contaminated soil could be disturbed by this project. Additional studies will determine the level and extent of the contamination so that appropriate measures can be taken to minimize exposure of those soils and the spread of any contamination.

### ***FLOODPLAINS***

The proposed project would require that fill material be placed within the 100 year floodplain in order to raise the roadway out of the floodplain. In order to minimize the impact of this fill material on the existing floodplain other areas may be excavated or otherwise modified in such a way that the project will not adversely impact the floodplain consistent with the standards/criteria of the National Flood Insurance Program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

## ***BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES***

### ***Sensitive Habitats***

Sensitive habitats occurring or potentially occurring in the project study area include blue elderberry shrubs, which are the host plant for the federally threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle (VELB) oak trees. Also occurring in the study area are valley oak and blue oak, creeks and riparian corridors and wetlands.

An undetermined number of elderberry shrubs will be removed or otherwise impacted by the proposed project. These elderberry shrubs could provide habitat for the federally threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle.

The project would remove an undetermined number of oaks located within the study area.

### ***Special-status Animals***

There are recorded sightings of ten special-status animal species in the project vicinity: valley elderberry longhorn beetle, California tiger salamander, western spadefoot toad, western pond turtle, Swainson's hawk, prairie falcon, burrowing owl, bank swallow, tri-colored blackbird and Townsend's western big-eared bat.

Four special-status species could occur in the project area due to the presence of potentially suitable habitat, the foothill yellow-legged frog, giant garter snake, Cooper's hawk and white-tailed kite.

### ***Special-status Plant Species***

There are recorded sightings of 33 special-status plant species in the general vicinity of the project study area. Habitats in and adjacent to the project study area could potentially support 11 special-status plant species including brittlescale, San Joaquin spearscale, Palmate-bracted bird-beak, deep-scarred cryptantha, Snow Mountain buckwheat, adobe-lily, Northern California black walnut, Heckard's pepper-grass, Colusa grass, Delta woolly-marbles, and Crampton's tuctoria. It is unlikely that these species will occur in the project areas due to the extent of historic and on-going disturbances associated with maintenance and agricultural activities.

### ***Invasive Pest Plant Species***

This project could result in the spread of exotic species; and the areas disturbed could enhance the spread of exotic species occurring in the immediate project area.

## ***ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES***

At least eight buildings/structures within the project area have been previously evaluated and are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. According to the Caltrans State Historical Bridge Listing, none of the bridges along the project route are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

## ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES***

The project area is expected to contain both prehistoric and historic archaeological sites and/or features. Very little of the project area has been surveyed for cultural resources in the past, and it is likely that archeological test excavations will be required at select locations.

## ***HAZARDOUS MATERIALS***

Hazardous waste investigations will be conducted to determine the type and extent of any hazardous waste contamination within the project area. At this time it is anticipated that mercury and/or aerially deposited lead contaminated soils may be present in the project area.

## ***AIR QUALITY***

There may be short-term air quality impacts associated with the construction of the proposed improvements. The sources likely sources of air pollution are exhaust from construction equipment, and windblown dust (fugitive dust) generated during excavation, grading, and hauling. The impacts from these activities would vary each day as construction progresses and according to the proximity of the receptors to the construction activities.

## ***NOISE***

If traffic noise impacts are identified, noise abatement measures will be considered for inclusion in the project.